

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER
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able men, it must "be admitted, divided the Republican party. He was accused, too, of acting as a drag, of checking the progress of the democracy, of sacrificing principles to personal interest. He had certainly become somewhat sluggish so far as measures were concerned, and, as Zola put it, he seemingly imagined that orations sufficed for everything. "It was not his actions which gave him his position, but his phrases," Zola wrote. "He has always defeated his adversaries by phrases. He has acquired authority by phrases. . . . If there be any question of taking a forward step he makes a speech. If there be a question of warding off a danger he makes a speech. If there be a question, of making his authority felt he again makes a speech. He speechifies without a break, and all over the country."¹

Later, after Gambetta had come into conflict with his constituents, and the elections of 1881 had shown that the so-called Opportunist cause was seriously compromised, Zola returned to the attack, and one may more appropriately quote a passage from his article called "Drunken Slaves," as it shows how deftly he profited by an opportunity to defend his literary cause while dealing with a political subject. Before giving that passage, however,

is as well to explain that Gambetta, having encountered a hostile reception at an electoral meeting at Charonne, had completely lost his head. Threatening his adversaries (all working-men) with his walking stick he shouted to them furiously: "Silence, you squallers! silence, you brawlers! . . . You pack of drunken slaves, I will track you to your lairs!" And as if this were not sufficient, his

i "Una Campagne," Gambatta, p. 105.